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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2001
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 GUANGZHOU 06598

BEIJING PLEASE PASS CHENGDU

E.O. 12356: DECL:OADR

AIT TAIPEI 1319

TAGS: PGOV, PHUM, ELAB, ETRD, CH

SUBJECT: JOHN KAMM'S VISIT TO MEIXIAN PRISON

REF: BEIJING 033518

1. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

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PAGE 02 GUANGZ 06598 01 OF 02 240528Z

2. SUMMARY. HONG KONG HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST JOHN KAMM VISITED MEIXIAN PRISON IN GUANGDONG PROVINCE OCTOBER 22-23. HE SAW NO SIGN OF PRISON MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS DESTINED FOR EXPORT NOR OF ANY POLITICAL PRISONERS. HE DID CONFIRM TWO PRISONERS INCARCERATED IN MEIXIAN FOR THEIR RELIGIOUS VIEWS HAD BEEN RELEASED EARLIER THIS YEAR. MEIXIAN PRISON, ONE OF GUANGDONG'S LARGEST, HAS A REPUTATION FOR BEING A "HARD" PRISON.

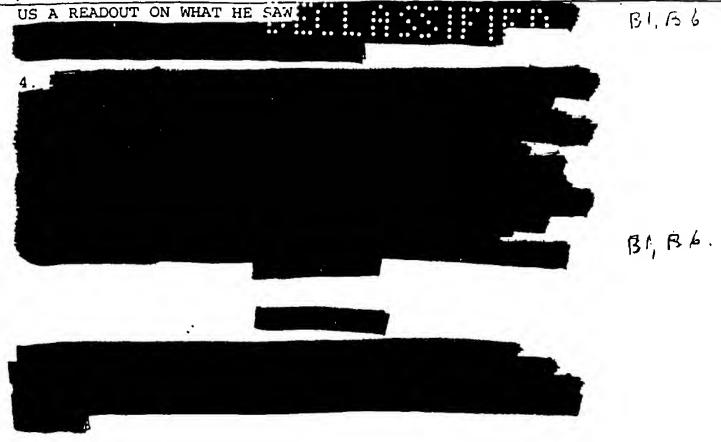
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END SUMMARY.

3. HÖNG KONG BUSINESSMAN AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST JOHN KAMM RETURNED FROM A VISIT TO A PRISON IN GUANGDONG PROVINCE'S MEIXIAN COUNTY OCTOBER 23 AND GAVE

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CHANNEL: n/a



5. DURING HIS VISIT TO MEIXIAN, KAMM LEARNED BOTH MAI AND SUN WERE RELEASED LAST MAY SHORTLY AFTER KAMM HAD FIRST ENQUIRED ABOUT THEM WITH THE MOJ. MAI AND FU BELONG TO A SMALL PROTESTANT SECT CALLED THE *SHOUTERS.* THEY WERE ARRESTED IN 1983 AND SENTENCED TO LONG SENTENCES (12 AND 9 YEARS, RESPECTIVELY) IN 1986. KAMM WAS TOLD AT MEIXIAN THEY HAD BEEN RELEASED BECAUSE OF THEIR ADVANCED AGE.

6. KAMM WAS ALSO TOLD THERE WERE NO POLITICAL PRISONERS AT MEIXIAN WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SOME "TAIWAN SPIES.

B1,B6

WHAT HE SAW WERE A LOT OF PRISONERS WITH NEW SHOES AND FULL LUNCH PLATES. KAMM SAID PRISONERS SEEMED GENUINELY PLEASED TO HAVE A FOREIGN VISITOR. WHETHER IT WAS THE NOVELTY OR THE HOPE OF IMPROVED CONDITIONS, HE COULD NOT SAY, BUT HE SUSPECTED IT WAS THE LATTER.

7. THERE WAS NOT ENOUGH TIME, APPARENTLY, FOR ANY EXTENSIVE SPRUCING UP IN ANTICIPATION OF KAMM'S ARRIVAL. PRISON PRODUCTION SEEMED TO BE CONFINED TO SOME KIND OF WHEEL ASSEMBLY LINE FOR LOCAL MOTOR CONFIDENTIAL

te Printed: 01/24/1997 DOC_NUMBER: 91GUANGZ06598 CHANNEL: n/a

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 GUANGZ 06598 01 OF 02 240528Z VEHICLES--NOTHING LIKELY TO BE EXPORTED TO THE U.S. OR OTHER COUNTRIES. AS IN MANY PRISONS (OR, AS THE MOJ CALLS THEM, "LAOGAI DUI," I.E., LABOR REFORM CAMPS), PRISON STAFF FAMILY MEMBERS HAVE SET UP SMALL PRIVATE ENTERPRISES AROUND THE PRISON TO SUPPLEMENT THEIR FAMILIES' INCOME. KAMM LAMENTED ONE OF THE PROBLEMS OF INVESTIGATING REPORTS OF PRISON LABOR PRODUCTS BEING MADE FOR EXPORT WAS SEPARATING THESE KINDS OF PRODUCTS FROM THOSE ACTUALLY MADE BY THE PRISONERS.

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PAGE ACTIO	01 N EAP-01	GUANGZ	06598 0	2 OF 02	2405282		
INFO	LOG-00 COME-00 INR-01 OMB-01 SNP-01 USIE-00	ACDA-13 DODE-00 IO-19 PA-01 SP-01 /099W	ADS-00 ANHR-01 LAB-04 PM-01 SR-01	AID-01 EB-01 L-03 PRS-01 SS-01	AIT-03 HA-09 NSAE-00 P-01 STR-18	AMAD-01 H-01 NSCE-00 RP-10 TRSE-00	CIAE-00 INRE-00 OIC-02 SIL-01 T-01

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 GUANGZHOU 06598

CONFIDENTIAL

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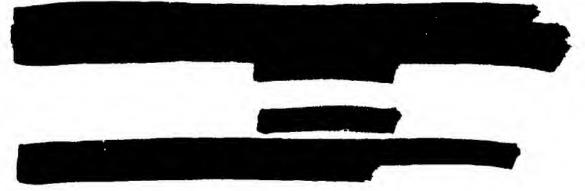
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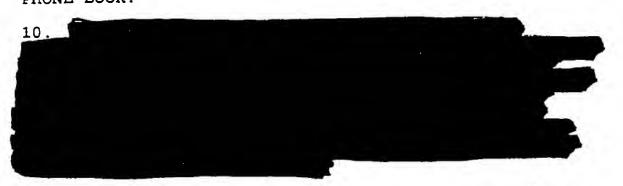
SUBJECT: JOHN KAMM'S VISIT TO MEIXIAN PRISON



B1, B6

9. THE LARGE NUMBER OF PRISONS (A TOTAL OF 131)
"NEWSWEEK" REPORTED IN A RECENT ARTICLE IN CONNECTION
WITH THE U.S. TELEVISION "60 MINUTES" EXPOSE ON CHINESE
PRISONS INCLUDED THE LOCAL DETENTION CENTERS RUN BY THE
PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU (PSB) AS WELL AS THE MOJ
FACILITIES. PRISONERS TEND TO STAY IN THE DETENTION
CENTERS UNTIL SENTENCED AND, IF THE SENTENCE IS LESS
THAN THREE YEARS, CONTINUE TO SERVE THEIR TIME WITH THE
PSB RATHER THAN THE MOJ. THE PSB HAS A DETENTION
CENTER IN AT LEAST EVERY COUNTY IN GUANGDONG PROVINCE.
KAMM SAID GUANGDONG'S "LARGE NUMBER" OF PRISONS AND
DETENTION CENTERS REFLECTS, MORE THAN ANYTHING,
GUANGDONG'S OPENNESS. UNLIKE OTHER PROVINCES,
GUANGDONG'S DETENTION CENTERS ARE EVEN LISTED IN THE
PHONE BOOK.

B1, 136



11. KAMM WILL BE PUBLICIZING HIS VISIT TO MEIXIAN AND ALSO THE RELEASE OF THE TWO RELIGIOUS PRISONERS.

B1, 136

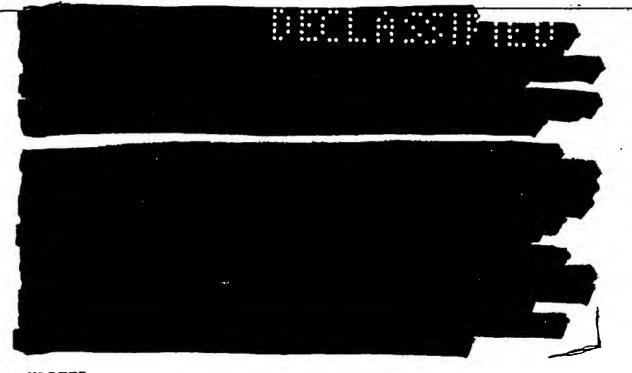


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- *** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a
- *** Current Classification *** CONFIDENTIAL